



jagvision

For Environmental Clean-Up
of the Muggah Creek Watershed

JAG: Joint Action Group

Volume 3 • Issue 1: Spring 2000

JAG's Mission

To educate, involve and empower the community through partnerships, to determine and implement acceptable solutions for Canada's worst hazardous waste site, and to assess and address the impact on human health.

Work Begins

Muggah Creek Interceptor Sewer

The Muggah Creek Interceptor Sewer is a 4.8-km sewer that is comprised of two main branches. It is designed to handle future sanitary sewage flows from the Muggah Creek drainage area. The main branch extends from Battery Point primarily along the railroad right-of-way terminating at Brookland Street. The second branch originates at Victoria Road and follows Victoria Road and Cape Breton Street, terminating at Ferry Street, where it ties into the Muggah Creek Branch. There are a number of minor tributary sewers included as part of the two branches as well as a small lift station at Townsend Street. When the project is complete, it will intercept flows from approximately 30 existing outfalls surrounding Muggah Creek and convey the sewage, using a lift station and screening facility, to a marine outfall and diffuser to be located off of Battery Point.

The Muggah Creek Interceptor Sewer has undergone an extensive consultation and environmental review process. The initial conceptual design for the sewer was presented to the pub-

lic in the summer of 1998 at a public meeting. On March 27, 2000 the project received CEAA approval.

The review process resulted in important changes to the design of the sewer. Many of the changes were put in place after due consideration of the public input from the community. The sewer design will now include a lift station and screening facility at Battery Point for solids removal. Extensive oceanographic modeling during the review stages assisted in the development of an outfall diffuser that will improve the water quality in the harbor, over the original design. Concerns regarding contamination of the harbor from chemicals in the sewer, will be addressed by the implementation of a controls-at-source program that will be put in place by the municipality. A Water Quality Monitoring program will be implement-

ed to assess the predicted changes in habitat conditions within the diffuser area. The most important aspect of

the approval was the commitment by the Cape Breton Regional Municipality to develop a Wastewater Management Plan Implementation Strategy by April 1, 2001. This will identify the municipality's plans for building sewage treatment facilities for Sydney Harbour as well as for the other

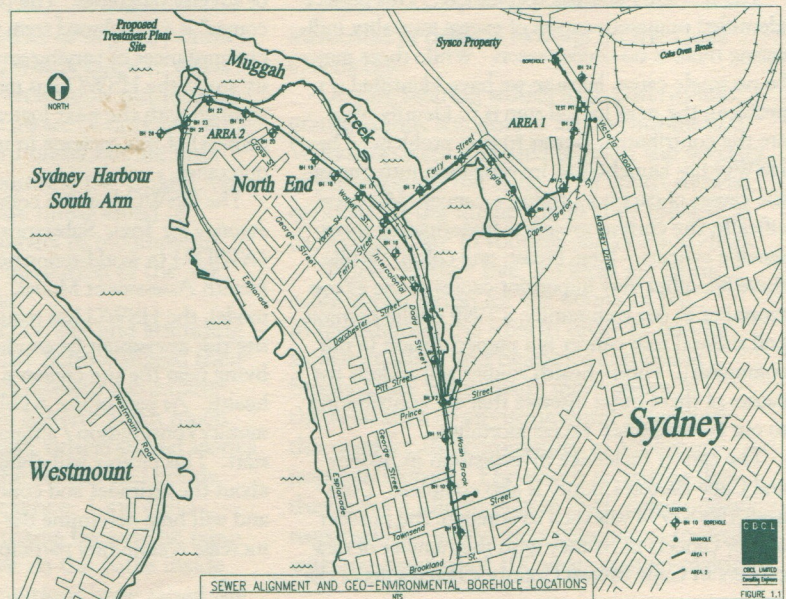
communities across the municipality.

At the current time, the design engineers are refining the changes in the design and a revised schedule and cost estimate are being prepared. The next steps will involve obtaining the necessary regulatory permits, finalizing land acquisition issues, and tendering. Construction is expected to be underway in the fall of this year. The project will be completed on time by March 31, 2002.

The review process resulted in important changes to the design of the sewer

Community Office Public Welcome

Our Community Site Office is located at 17 Lingan Road in Whitney Pier and is open to members of the public who may have questions, suggestions or concerns regarding the clean-up of the Tar Ponds and Coke Ovens Sites. The Community Office has representatives of the Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments, JAG and Sydney Environmental Resources Limited (who provide security on the Site), present on a rotating basis every weekday afternoon. Please drop by and say hello there are maps, pictures and information is available as well!



Chairman's Message

Often there have been, and rightly so, positive comments about the volunteers involved in JAG and the dedication they put into this process. There are of course others who are equally involved and who often receive little recognition for the time and effort they put into this process. At this time, I wish to draw attention to the four individuals who are collectively and affectionately known as "Team Sydney". Representing Environment Canada is Wayne Pierce, for Health Canada we have Janet Connor, from Department of Transportation and Public Works for Nova Scotia is Wilf Kaiser and from the Cape Breton Regional Municipality is Frank Potter.

These four dedicated members of the JAG process provide technical assistance and advice to members of Working Groups as they review reports and information of a technical nature. This advice assists the members of Working Groups to better understand an issue especially when it is presented in very technical terms. To provide this advice,

members of Team Sydney must spend many hours beyond their daily activities through attendance at Working Group meetings, sub-committee gatherings and committee deliberations. Often it is necessary for them to be away from their families for extended periods of time or give up on activities or leisure time as they provide this necessary function. In that regard, their dedication and support places strains on their daily lives in a manner similar to the volunteers who are members of the JAG process.

The same of course can be said about the six permanent staff members and three part-time staff employed in the JAG Secretariat. It is not uncommon to see Barry McCallum, the Program Coordinator, Germaine LeMoine, the Public Information Officer, Roschell Clarke, Community Outreach Officer, our Executive Assistant, Janet Gnatiuk, and our support staff of Beverly MacDonald, Susan Henderson, Lorraine Munroe, David Mahalik and Dale Murphy "burn-

ing the midnight oil". These dedicated, concerned and motivated employees provide the support and assistance to Working Groups, Steering Committee and Roundtable. The level of activity within JAG ensures that they never experience a "dull" moment, which of course means that they must also "give up" many hours that might otherwise be spent with families, friends or in other activities.

The members of "Team Sydney" and the staff of the JAG Secretariat alike provide a level of support that is considered above and beyond the call of duty. It is obvious that the dedication and high level of commitment comes not only from their personal commitment but also, from the reality that our community is counting on the JAG process being successful. This success will lead to a clean-up of the Muggah Creek Watershed, which will provide a great deal of gratification to these hard working individuals.

Dan Fraser Chairman, JAG

Update

Health Studies Working Group

The Health Studies Working Group has worked hard to develop a new mission, vision, and goals. The group is in the final stages of their strategic action plan that will be followed to fulfill the mission and attain the vision.

Health studies are often complicated and long-term projects; thus, the HSWG has several projects that are ongoing. The Cape Breton Health Survey (often referred to as the GEO Project) is well underway with a large amount of health and environmental data now in the database. Over the next few months, this data will be examined by epidemiologists, and a visit from the managers of this project is expected in the early fall to provide an update.

The mortality analysis is complete. This project identified numerous causes of excess mortality indicating there is no single reason. While there may be no single cause, because we have identified a problem, the next logical step is to identify what are the contributing factors to that problem. The HSWG has launched an investigation into one of the causes of excess mortality – cancer. More specifically, the current project is investigating three specific cancers – lung, breast, and colon. While there are other very important causes of the excess mortality in our community, a 1999 public opinion poll showed that cancer is a preoccupation in our community. Future health studies will address the causes of these other diseases that are contributing to our communities' excess mortality.

The cancer incidence investigation in Sydney and Cape Breton County is also complete. Data from 1980-1998 was used to compare the number of new cancers in Sydney with the number of new cancers in Cape Breton County. The results of the

analyses found that a small number of certain kinds of cancer is elevated in Sydney when compared to Cape Breton County, but for most cancers, Sydney residents are at no greater risk than those who live in Cape Breton County. The cancers of most noticeable increase in this report were colon and rectum in men and breast, cervix, and oral cancer in women. Overall, the data suggests that female residents of Sydney have experienced a risk of 11% over those in Cape Breton County and in men this increased risk is 8%. This translates to about 5 excess male cancer cases and 6 excess female cancer cases.

The reproductive outcomes project indicated that our community has an increase in the number of adverse outcomes. The phrase "adverse outcomes" is a very broad term that includes numerous circumstances of varying severity. Like the mortality study, the HSWG has made efforts to follow through with the next logical step - to identify the cause(s) of this increase in reproductive adverse outcomes.

The HSWG has also committed to following the Agency for Toxic Substance and Diseases Registry (ATSDR) (a world-renowned US agency) Public Health Assessment Model. In keeping with this model, the HSWG has requested that a current site risk assessment be conducted to determine if living near the site creates a hazard to human health. As part of the ATSDR model, a community consultation / animation project is about to start. This project will obtain valuable information about the attitudes and concerns of the community and will help determine the most effective ways to increase community participation and education.

Health Risk Assessment

Community Participation

The Community Health Risk Assessment Subcommittee of Steering was brought together to establish standards by which the community could peer review "health risk assessments" being undertaken by various agencies contracted by governments on any JAG projects. The committee is made up of all working group chairs, government representatives, and the JAG Secretariat. Because some working groups may recommend projects that will require a human health risk assessment, it was important to have the chairs of those working groups well aware of the ongoing and exhaustive efforts to ensure the community participates in the process of health risk assessment. Other working groups may have a different role to play. Having the working group chairs on this committee allows for a very effective way to communicate health risk information to their respective working group members who are part of the community and interact with the broader community.

This group has met twice already and is currently being educated on the different health risk assessment models accepted around the globe. Future presentation topics will include health risk assessment design and use, how they differ, and how they are similar. In the near future, the group is expected to produce a Sydney model for community health risk assessment. All future JAG projects will be subject to review under this new model to protect the health of our community.

Activities Bring Economic Benefits

As a result of the activities of the Joint Action Group (JAG), there are economic benefits going directly, into our community now and more possible in the future. In some cases, JAG is not able to directly influence economic growth but by its very existence, may open the door for others to "grab hold" of opportunities and make things happen.

The annual budget of \$633,000 allotted to the JAG Secretariat includes \$200,000 of in kind services from the Cape Breton Regional Municipality. Of the remaining \$433,000, the federal gov-

ernment provides

\$211,000, the provincial government \$211,000 and the Municipality provides \$11,000 in funds. Wage costs for six full time employees and three part time employees, including salaries and benefits,

account for \$298,000. This money benefits the local economy in that the employees live in and around the local area. The remainder of the Secretariat's budget is spent directly in our community for the purchase of supplies and services required in support of the volunteers and staff. In that regard, local businesses benefit from increased sales and the provision of required services. Spending within our community by the JAG Secretariat, following strict policy and procedures to ensure all expendi-

tures are legitimized provides additional funds to our local economy in one way or another.

The recent announcement that at least \$12 million will be spent on four major contracts is excellent news for our community. Not only is this getting us ready for a clean-up, most of this money will be spent here and includes such things as rental charges for office space, furniture, office equipment, employees salaries and related expenditures. There has also been an increase in people employed as a result of the contracts starting to take hold

and more will follow. As the projects get underway, other businesses such as laboratory services, equipment supply firms, construction firms (small and medium jobs), and a host of other requirements will add to the overall inputs to our local economy.

Hotel accommodations, restaurants, conference rooms, and transportation facilities have all benefited to one extent or another as a direct result of JAG.

To date, JAG has used the services of some of our local Information Technology firms and more contracts will be let as the requirements dictate. Opportunities for research will continue to grow, and it is hoped that some of these activities will involve UCCB in one way or another. For example, specific research, which

could include the study of plant or vegetation on the site to determine the types or kinds of plants that might be useful for remediating some contaminants, is possible.

On other fronts, the health studies that have been conducted to date and those to come, all undertaken in keeping with JAG's mission statement, "to assess the impact of human health", also add to our local economy in a positive way. These are but a few of the activities that are ongoing or will take place as a direct result of JAG's presence in our community.

Considering that the bulk of the work of JAG has been spearheaded by the volunteers of JAG, in that they have determined what resolutions should be considered for funding by our government partners, our community owes them a great deal of gratitude. The volunteers have given freely of their time (and continue to do so) and put untold energy and dedication into JAG. In turn, our community is starting to reap the benefits from the economic impact, which is only partly described here. As time progresses and JAG, along with the assistance of our community, in selecting the best possible solutions to remediate the Muggah Creek Watershed, additional economic benefits will befall our community. More importantly, this community will rid itself of the blight we know as the Tar Ponds and Old Coke Ovens sites through a government funded clean-up.

"our community is starting to reap the benefits from the economic impact"

In the Local Schools

Making Impressions

Local schools are being provided the opportunity to learn more about the issues surrounding the remediation of the Muggah Creek Watershed Area. Roschell Clarke, Community Outreach Officer for the Joint Action Group, has been visiting schools during recent months to educate and inform the students about the Tar Ponds and the Coke Ovens Site. School presentations provide JAG with an important tool for gaining insight into the questions and concerns students and staff members have about this environmental problem within our community.

The audience is provided an opportunity to ask questions during all segments of the presentation. In essence, presentations are usually developed according to the questions posed by the students. Questions have varied, depending upon the proximity of the school to the sites. When Roschell visits a class,

students are asked whether or not they know what "JAG" stands for, which helps to assess their knowledge base. In schools not located near the site, many are aware of only one contaminated site (the Tar Ponds) but are unfamiliar with issues surrounding the Coke Ovens Site. As well, many are uninformed of the efforts by JAG members to recommend a technology for the remediation of the Tar Ponds and Coke Ovens.

Students living near the site and attending Whitney Pier Elementary School shared their experiences on living so close to a contaminated site. While some haven't given much consideration to the issue, others shared stories of playing hockey on the brooks and ponds inside the Coke Ovens fence. One child voiced concern about toxins because he regularly rides his motorbike on the paths inside the fence. Such presentations have raised the

awareness of dangers existing on the Coke Ovens Site.

Despite hearing stories from parents and grandparents, students at an Environmental Workshop were surprised to learn the severity of pollution on the sites. The youth showed concern for the quality of air they breathe as they participate in routine outdoor activities.

Wherever they live, students are gaining more appreciation for the efforts of JAG in remediating the sites in order to provide a cleaner, safer, and healthier community. Students are being made more aware of the relevance of environmental issues and the need for the community to act for an improved future. The youth recognize that they have a role to play in their community's responsibility as the next generation to deal with the residual of 100 years of steel making.

Measuring Our Success

In many circles, such as the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2), the JAG process has been held up as a model example for what community-based processes can achieve. Certainly there are few, if any, other cases where a community-based organization has been given a mandate as large and complicated as JAG's with governments committing such a significant amount of money to support their recommendations. However, when it's a sum of money like \$62 million, it is essential to have a rigorous evaluation function to make sure that progress is being made and that taxpayers are getting the best "bang for their buck".

Toward this objective, an independent committee has been created to oversee the evaluation of the three-year, \$62 million cost-share agreement announced last May. This committee is made up of a representative of each level of government, plus

a JAG-nominated representative of the Sydney community. Local businessman John Morrison has been selected to fill this position.

As President of the local Business Improvement District Commission for about eight years, Morrison is emphatic about the critical importance of ensuring the clean-up of the coke ovens and tar ponds sites proceeds on track and on time.

"For some time now, it has been very evident that the tar ponds represent more than an environmental and potential health problem -- it has become a socio-economic problem because of the negative perceptions about living and doing business here," he explains. "Thus, the ability of the community to draw investment and support from banks is very limited, and even growing businesses in this community are denied access to development money."

"I want to ensure that any and all work that is done, is done right, and I want to be sure people know about it in order to change their opinions. We need to clean-up these sites and remove this stigma for the well-being of the whole community."

The main purpose of this evaluation is to measure how efficiently and effectively projects are being delivered under the cost-share agreement. Through the evaluation, the committee will look at the various projects being undertaken, the delivery of the agreement by the

government partners, and the effectiveness of the community-based process. The evaluation is also intended to serve as an ongoing management tool over the course of the three-year agreement, which ends in March 2002. It should also help to ensure that a solid foundation is laid for moving towards the ultimate clean-up of the Tar Ponds and Coke Ovens sites.

"From the evaluation committee members I've met, I see all kinds of experience and keenness at the table," explains JAG Chairperson Dan Fraser. "We hope that this translates into a thorough and productive evaluation of both the positive and negative aspects of the JAG process and of the delivery of the cost-share agreement by governments -- an evaluation that will help us to make continuous improvements as we move down the path to the future clean-up."

***"I want to ensure
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is done right."***

John Morrison

A joint meeting was recently held between the Intergovernmental Coordinating Committee (ICC) and the Evaluation Committee to discuss the purpose and scope of the evaluation as well as review a draft work plan developed by the ICC. This work-plan proposes the indicators of success for all of the elements of the Cost-share Agreement, describing in detail

concrete measures which show if our goals have been met. The committee's next steps are to complete the Terms of Reference for a Request for Proposals to hire a professional evaluation firm to complete an evaluation framework. Once the framework is finished, it will be submitted for approval by the Evaluation Committee and the Executive Committee, which was established to oversee this initiative. Subsequently, further contracting will be undertaken to implement the Evaluation Plan proposed by the framework. The final evaluation will be completed at the end of the 2002 fiscal year.

"Although this evaluation is clearly independent of JAG, we hope that we can take the lessons learned during this three year agreement and apply them toward the future phases of the clean-up," explains Fraser. "We think it's also possible that these principles could be applied to similar undertakings in other parts of the world."

Check Out

www.muggah.org!

MEDIA RELEASES

JAG Announces New Contract, 17 Feb., 2000

Air Monitoring Backgrounder, 17 Feb., 2000

Project Management Consultant Backgrounder, 17 Feb., 2000

Phase II/III Environmental Site Assessment Backgrounder, 17 Feb. 2000

Key Milestones Backgrounder, 17 Feb. 2000

Interim Separation Zones Criteria, 6 July, 1999

Phase I Site Assessment, 24 Feb., 1999

Coke Ovens Stoppage, 4 Jan., 1999

Biomedical Waste Project, 4 Feb., 1998

Demolition, 17 Mar., 1998

Draft Mortality Analysis, 23 Sept., 1998

Public Opinion Poll, 25 Nov. 1998

LIBRARY

Articles of Incorporation

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Public Opinion Poll

Final Report - Material Sampling Program

Phase I Site Assessment

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

MINUTES (years 1996 through 2000)

Roundtable, Steering Committee

Planning Committee, EDGAR, Governance

MOU Subcommittee, Health Studies, PEP

Site Security, Remedial Options

MUGGAH CREEK WATERSHED

(includes written background and real video)

The Municipal Landfill Area

The Coke Ovens Site

The Muggah Creek Estuary (Tar Ponds)

Map of the area

THE MUGGAH CREEK STORY

Cape Breton's Steel Industry

The Steel Companies

Environmental Awakening

The Joint Action Group

JAG ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS

Roundtable

Steering Committee

Working Groups